

The Rhythm in Storm

By

J. H. A. B. WILLIAMS

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TO MY LITERARY FRIENDS

In this effort I have given expression to my thought by translating waves of emotional impulse into natural waves of verse and rhythm.

May "The Rhythm in Storm" suggest not only the rhythm in Nature but also the appeal that rhythm makes to every well-ordered life.

J. H. A. B. W.

The Rhythm in Storm.

The sultry summer night wears slowly on.

Save for the bells that mark the flocks

on near-by hills, no sound is heard—

The voices of the night are still.

That deathly stillness, which in itself

strikes fear into the heart,

And which portends great storms, broods

o'er the earth--

Dread silence rules the night.

Not long, -- this lack of stir and inactivity.

The distant west grows dim and pale --

As up the vaulted sky the clouds fast-

gathering creep, the stars go out --

Flashes of light against the leaden sky, --

now glow and pale.

Low rumblings, as if 'twere muffled drums,

with measured rhythm beat the air --

Faint heralds of the coming storm.

The storm comes on apace --

As the waking lion leaves its lair,

and with gleaming eyes and mighty roar

goes forth to terrorize the earth,

So, but far more terrible, the waking storm

quits its dread abode and descends

upon the home of man.

The mighty wind, long-slumbering,
loosed at last, with demoniac shriek
sweeps down the brow of yonder hill
for midnight revelry—
To wrestle with the giant trees—
To pit its strength against the works
of man.
Serpent-like the lightning hurls itself,
and bores great holes into the night—
From cloud to cloud, from sky to earth,
it follows in its unseen paths—
Happy, we, if in its path no life is found.
The thunder's crash—earth's deepest sound—
reverberates from hill to hill—
is thrown back and back again,
Until it finds at last the valley's length.
And what was once a rattling crash

becomes deep music, as it grows faint,
and still more faint, and leaves
the valley.

With rhythmic pitter-pat the rain begins
to fall—

Heaven's floods no longer held intact
descend upon the parching earth,—
to quench its burning thirst—
to scour—to cleanse,

And if confined, perhaps, destroy.

And, so there is a rush of sound—
The rain's faint lisp—the thunder's roar—
the wind's wild shriek.

Sometimes 'tis soothing music to the ear,
and then distracting noise, as if 'twere
demons in despair

The sweetest note that ever sped the
living lyre—

The weirdest shriek that ever left
a demon's throat—is there—

The harmonies and discords soothe and grate,
Mingled with varied sounds, the lightning
glares—

Flash after flash lights up the ebon night,
only to be hurled back in the unequal
strife—

Not light but darkness rules the night.

With unabated zeal the storm raves on—
'Tis Nature blending all that's worst
and best—

'Tis but the conflict that precedes great
peace.

At length the storm, its fury spent,

sweeps by —

The lightning's power grows less and less

The rolling thunder's distant peal more

sweet and low.

Before the wind, the clouds brush down

the eastern sky, and all is calm,

and bright, and beautiful —

From out the starry sky, the wandering moon

looks forth upon a new-washed earth,

And with reflected glory says, "The strife

is o'er — the sun, though hidden, shines —

Some Unseen Hand still guides,

and all is well."

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